

# *The Midland*

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## **Nameless?**

By GEORGE CARVER

I saw a woman weeping,  
Old and tired and soiled of life.  
Tramp of iron-shod soldier feet,  
Bowed heads along the hallowed street.

I saw a woman weeping,  
A restless child in her arms.  
Sob of drum-beat in the air,  
Steel of bayonet flashing there.

I saw a woman weeping,  
A jewel blazed on her hand.  
Flag-draped coffin borne along,  
Murmured dirge of funeral song.

I saw a thousand weeping,  
Mothers, widows, blighted girls.  
Nameless? he for whom all these  
Watched nights long on bended knees?

## Hymeneal

By PHILIP DUFFIELD STONG

June the first, and Pittsville — the smothering hot winds already beginning to blow fitfully across the Mississippi from the ribbed grates of Illinois corn-fields; the young corn reaching greedily after the sunlight which dallied now and would be wanton in July; the oldest inhabitants, and some not so old, already reserving chairs and crates in the traditionally cool spots beneath the trees that made Water Street a Great Green Way. Up from Water Street the dusty roads were powdered grey and drab — darker where the arched elms and maples shadowed the road with arches clean-cut by their distance.

Pittsville was quiet in summer — it was also quiet in spring, fall, and winter. The white houses were small, but peaceful and dignified beneath the peace and dignity of the trees, which rose in a crescent terrace from the ox-bow of the river, low-voiced and austere.

Pittsville was very old — almost a hundred years. Its infancy it had passed in squalling at the Indians and the Rebels; in adolescence it had courted factories, railroads, greatness; in maturity it had bred a poet and a statesman; now it had settled to the contemplative serenity of age.

None of Pittsville's people reflected this spirit more consistently and truly than Margaret. She had watered the plants on the vine-embossed sun-porch; dinner simmered on a stove at the back of

the house; the little house itself had been swept and dusted speckless and the green blinds drawn to shade the rooms and discourage flies. The sunlight glanced mottling through the vines upon Margaret's just greying hair, and shuttled smoothly along her arm as it lifted and fell with her needle.

Her face, the slightly sun-touched smooth skin scarcely graven — her eyes, pale hazel under light brown brows — were very grave and steady, very serene. Her certain fingers hardly trembled at all as they darned the socks that she would never darn again. A whimsy smile of sadness touched her face. To regret socks to darn!

A rattling wagon jerked to a stop in the road outside.

"Watuhmillon foah dinnuh, Mizz' Crothuh?"

She looked down with a smile to the gray-haired negro at the porch railing. "Put it in the ice-box, Josh."

"Yes, mam." He tapped among the green globes in the rickety wagon-bed, made a choice and offered her a knife and the melon, its white belly carefully held down.

"Wants to plug it, Mizz' Crothuh?"

"Why, Josh, you know more by tapping than I would by plugging — I'll take your word for it."

"Yes, mam — that's right, mam." He took an uncertain step toward the house door, paused, and looked uncertainly at the melon. Mrs. Crothers watched her needle scrupulously. Josh sighed and tapped again on the melon.

"Soun's ripe," he remarked.

"It must be if you think so. Guess you know melons, Josh."

Josh tapped again and sighed. "Guess that ol' melon ain't so ripe as she might be." He paused again, but Margaret was watching her needle. Then silently, he returned to his wagon, went through the business of tapping again and returned to the house with a new prize. Margaret heard him rattling in the ice-box, and in a minute he returned to the porch, chuckling.

"Guess that's about the fo'ty-millionth time Ah's tried to sell you a green millon," he said, "but you always ketches me, mam. Yes, mam, about the fo'ty-millionth time."

Margaret looked up laughing. "I caught you, Josh?"

"Yes, mam, you know right well you ketch me. Ev'ry day I think, 'Ah'm goin' put an' ol' green millun in Mizz' Crothuh's ice-box today, sure 'nuff, an' then she ain't gon' depen' on me no moah,' but Ah jes' don' have the haht to do it, mam."

"I'd think you'd made a mistake, Josh."

"That's jest it, mam. Ah ain' got the haht to do it. But Ah's gon' to some day — you bettah watch me." He chuckled to himself, pausing on the porch a moment. The chuckles died away and his face assumed a funereal solemnity. "Heah how you all is goin' have a wedding at youah house tomo'ow."

"I guess that's right, Josh."

"Well, well, how the chillun do grow up! 'Peahs

like it ain't been no time since Kahl an' me us't to dip ouah eahs in a watuhmillon togethah. Reckon he don't eat watuhmillon in his fingahs no moah." Josh laughed to himself.

Margaret said nothing and Josh continued. "Miss Helen is a mighty fine little lady — mighty fine . . . she haf to be to ma'y youah Kahl." This flattery brought a glance and a smile. Josh ran his finger along a fluting of a porch column and drew it elaborately back.

"Seemed to me," he said with some hesitation, "kinda thought as how he'd make ma'ying with some of the gals at college . . . kinda thought that way." He paused for comment which was not forthcoming.

"Reckon afteh all they don't make 'em much niceh than Miss Helen. Kahl's a lucky boy. Gid-dap!" to his team.

Margaret stared after him with a faint astonishment on her face. Had the old colored man been trying to express, with Afroid diplomacy, the vague discontent that she herself felt? She slipped the sewing bag from her lap and entered the house. From a drawer in a compromise furnishing called a "secretary" she drew pictures, sorting them until at her side lay two piles, the smaller containing a dozen photographs of all sizes and mountings.

There were four baby pictures: Carl had been a pretty baby, and as she looked at the puffy, smiling face she forgot for the moment that he had become more; her arms unconsciously shaped to cradle the

little round softness, her eyes bent and lips shaped to echo back his smiling, cooing cheerfulness. If she could only tell him, knowing he understood, hearing his comprehending response, how perfect and adorable a delicate model of his father and of God, he was; if she could only know he knew her worship — for love is not entirely self-compensative.

She kissed the picture. "You — you — are to be married tomorrow — oh, baby — baby," and she laughed with tears in her eyes, forcing herself to realization of this, the truth. How wholly he had been hers — now to be wholly hers no more!

With ruthless honesty she smothered the quick, fierce jealousy that seized her; she had anticipated this and prepared for it. She did not question Helen's right to take the boy on mere grounds of ownership — after all, Carl was a baby no more; he was a man, a free agent, and as her mind told her this, her heart gave the thought the lie.

Carl in knickerbockers — here, her mind running back chronologically over an old beaten path, she remembered the beginning of an apprehension, one she had always known must come, but none the less keen for anticipation and understanding. Carl was growing, every day he was less hers! He thought and acted by his own volition, she did not know every moment and every detail of his life, as she had always known it. Carl in long trousers — Carl in cap and gown — how strange it had seemed to see him in that uniform of academic dignity! There the dawning compensation had come definitely to

her. He was no more a part of her, but he was her creation. She had tried to hold him by her heart, now he walked and willed alone — she opened her arms and let him go free. It had been beautiful and prideful, but this second birth had its throes.

Carl in uniform — she had never been reconciled to that. Cheerfully, for his sake, she had parted from him; cheerfully, for his father's sake, she had spoken of his going and his return; but she never ceased to think, bitterly, of the great agencies that hazarded him so complacently. She rendered lip-loyalty that irritated her. She knew that no abstract passion, supplied by statesmen who could not know her heart, could take his place. He returned, and she felt some shame because of her pride, which was not honest because she had not given freely. What had Helen felt? She had kissed the boy and sent him away, had she done it as Margaret did? Jealousy told Margaret she had not, but her heart knew that it was so.

She closed her eyes and thrust the pictures back into the drawer. This retrospection was not fair to herself or Helen — later, when she was more used to the thing. . . . Now, it only made pain for her and injustice for the girl. Marrying — how little she had thought of its general human significances — why, it was as solemnly serious as birth or death!

She had not understood this when she married Harry — she had only loved him very deeply, very greatly, and not wholly understood her own mother's tears. Carl — he might understand a little but

not wholly, no, never wholly; Carl, after all, a man.

She heard her husband's step in the hall and in a moment he knelt beside her, looking to her eyes as he had looked in every moment of stress, for his part. A whimsical smile touched the corners of his mouth as he understood, and he reached for the handle of the drawer, but Margaret stretched her palm against it and shook her head. Then he put his arm around her and kissed her and for a moment they were silent, looking at the tomb of the baby, the child, and the boy.

Standing beside him at the window she asked, "What do you think of it all, Harry — now that it's too late to change?"

He hesitated, weighing his phrases as the habits of law and legal form had taught him. "Helen is a fine girl — pure and sweet — could we ask any more?"

"For Carl?"

"Yes," he said slowly, "I know what you mean. Of course, he's our boy — but he — well, there's something *to* Carl. That's what you mean, isn't it, Margaret?"

She put her hand to his cheek. "Yes, Harry."

Again he hesitated. "Well," he said at last, "she'll never lead him to Carcassone — I wonder if Carcassone is a pleasant place to live?"

She looked at him wonderingly. "You hoped so much for him —"

"I hope a great deal for him yet."

"With her?"



Then he looked at her face again. "Have you been happy with me, Margaret?"

"Harry! But neither of us — forgive me — has been a pilgrim for Carcassone."

"You, Margaret."

She looked away through the window with a little smile on her face. "I wonder — oh, but this was better."

The man smiled gravely. "Is that your answer, dear?"

She considered this carefully. "Carl is a man, Harry."

"I wonder if it makes any difference?" But she saw that he was not convinced himself.

When Harry had gone after lunch, Margaret returned to the porch and the socks undarned. Harry had made her rest at lunch, talking of courts and suits, the funny old witness from the backwoods, the swift satire of other attorneys — she had laughed and for the moment forgotten, but now her question slipped back to her mind as easily and as inertly as the darning to the stocking-toe.

Carl and Helen had taken the car to the country for one more day of courtship; the boy had not returned to lunch. Her passing thought was that he might have given her his last day as hers; then she smiled at her own love-avarice. Tomorrow, tomorrow — how many tomorrows she had passed without acting upon her instinct that this day must come — without making the most of her possession while it was hers!

"Margaret — are you at home?"

She rose and took Helen's mother in her arms, laying her hot cheek upon a cheek as hot — then she held her at arm's length and smiled.

"Oh, Althea, you've been going through it too — isn't it a little like losing them — ?"

Then she laughed at the shocked face before her, but Althea was shocked for a moment only.

"Dear, it is a little — like — just that."

"Only tomorrow — and it was only yesterday they were babies together."

The woman was silent for a moment and then she startled Margaret with the question she had asked Harry.

"Margaret — what do you think of all this?"

Margaret took up her sewing again and stitched steadily. Althea and she had been friends for forty years — since they had started to school together, trudging along country roads from their fathers' adjoining farms — without a quarrel, without a harsh feeling, without even those petty troublesome comparisons of themselves or their children, that are candied wormwood.

Margaret's father, when he let Margaret out of the gate which was too high for her little legs to master, always slipped a nickel into her dinner-pail, "for dessert." Came a day when they sat together at the edge of the school-ground, eating their lunches, Althea staring timidly into her friend's face, and Margaret looking soberly into the far distance attempting for the first time to solve the ancient complexity of death.

She finished her lunch and quite mechanically lifted the paper from the bottom of the pail and looked for the "dessert" nickel. It was not there. Looking down in quick astonishment, comprehension came to her, the memory of all the trivial love-hieroglyphs that write the meaning of a soul, the surge of tenderness for one who has been able to speak a great love with things so small.

"Papa," she said, and began to cry.

Althea did not understand — it had seemed tolerably natural to her that since Margaret's father was dead, he could not put their nickel in the pail. He was gone, the nickel-cause was no more a cause. But she understood tears, and the magnificent mother-woman instinct made her draw the little girl's head to her heart; living love is the compensative for love lost, and Margaret grew quiet.

They remembered as they grew older and each felt in the other a fineness beyond her own — felt but not understood. Such friendships, founded on such mistakes, grow to be almost organic. They had married within a few weeks of each other, and when Althea's first baby died Margaret had helped her through the great experience of seeing life and death side by side. All their lives had been softened, their tragedies halved and their joys doubled by this rapport.

Now, for the first time, Margaret knew that the blood-love was more than all of these things, and she hesitated, watching the other woman's face, wondering how much she dared.

At last she said slowly, "What do you think of it, Althea?"

She saw Althea's eyes upon her own face and laughed softly.

"Dear, we have been too much to each other to be afraid of each other now. Tell me what you think."

"Margaret — do you think he will make Helen happy?"

Margaret looked up blankly. Of course Althea would think of it that way — *she* had thought "Will Helen make Carl happy?" Once the rapport had failed, and she realized now that it must have failed, no matter what love had been or what remained.

"Why shouldn't he, Althea?"

The woman sat down beside her and lay her hand upon Margaret's. Overwhelmingly came to Margaret, perhaps to Althea, the memory-aroma of the time when she, Margaret, had sewed baby clothes, and Althea had done exactly this thing, and smiling, with tears in her eyes, said, "He'll be older, dear, so he'll have to be a boy, and mine a girl."

It had come true and now they questioned.

"Dearest, I pray that he will. Carl is a splendid boy. But Helen is a home-girl; she was born to be a wife — just wife, and Carl — Carl is so restless —"

Restless!

"Of course," said Margaret, with a little twisted smile, "I looked at it from the other side. Helen — oh, she is fine, but she is just a wife, the centre of a home — and Carl — Carl is ambitious."

Then, seeing the suggestion of a crack in the bonds they had made firmer, year by year, they fell into panic and said no more. An automobile shot around the corner and down the street and Carl waved to them from it, laughing, his blonde hair tousled by the wind.

Althea rose. "Helen's home," she said, "it's all going to be all right — better than all right — isn't it, dear?"

Margaret smiled and nodded, her head bent over her sewing. It was too late to change — better an optimistic fatalism than a useless kicking against the pricks. And yet — and yet when Althea had gone, her mind went back to weigh, to doubt, to wonder if it should wish a different thing. Althea had seen from a different angle, but her doubts were evidence in Margaret's case.

She looked up as a car panted to a halt at the curb.

"Hullo, Mizz' Crother!"

"Hello, Cousin Will — what brings you to town at this time o' day?"

"Cousin Will," the son of her mother's sister, jumped out of his little car and began fishing around in the back of it.

"Brought in some stuff Ma sent you. Said she figured you wouldn't want to be cookin' much to-morrow." He was slowly loading himself with bundles, packages, and buckets, and Margaret hurried to his assistance. "Dad's got some melons under glass but he didn't send none — he figured

you'd get from Nigger Josh — Josh forced his quicker than Dad."

"Will — that's wonderful of Aunt Nan! How is she?"

"Well, she don't seem to git no older. She tried on today, and she says she kin wear the same dress to Carl's weddin' that she wore to your'n an' her own. Ma's mighty well preserved. Reckon she'll live to be a couple of hundred, any how. This," pointing to a package, "is stuffed peppers — you'll have to bake them — she says they ain't good warmed. These chickens is cooked, she says warm 'em on a slow fire. Anyhow she says she'll be in in time to help." He laughed. "Ma won't trust her cookin' to nobody — an' if it was anybody but you, Margaret, I'd say she was right."

"All the folks well, Will?"

"All fine — how's Harry? How's Carl bearin' up?"

Margaret smiled, but answered gravely. "Remarkably well, considering — aren't these peppers forced?"

"Yes'm — I taught Dad how to do that. I learned all that in the short course up at Ames. Ma didn't send no cake — said she reckoned you'd want to bake that yourself — which anyhow you could do it better than she could — an' that's right. Carl around?"

"He went down to the office a little while ago."

"These lawyers! Workin' the day before he's gettin' married."

"No, I think —"

"Well, he better anyhow. Kinda get use to the harness." He lowered his voice. "We're plannin' a terrible shivaree for him — don't tell him. Guess everybody in the county'll be there. I got the ol' siren from the fire-engine over at Millville." He put the last bundle down on the kitchen-table. "This is garden truck. There's mayonnaise in that jar — ma says put oil in it if you want to — it's mixed so it's all right with or without, but save some for her without — she don't take none to these Eyetalian things. This is ham grease to put in the blanch for the lettuce if you want to. What's Carl goin' to do now?"

Margaret looked up keenly. "Why, I guess he's going to keep on practicing with his father."

"That so? Understood a while back he was going into an office in Chicago."

"I think he changed his mind."

The man laughed shrewdly. "Guess little Helen helped him change it. Well, anyhow, he'd just as well stick around his kin. We ain't no fancy folks here, I guess, but there's a mighty lot solid to us. They ain't no solider in Chicago, I guess — though there's more of 'em."

Margaret laughed, knowing the pastoral, unambitious, gentle heart of the man. "You admit there are more of them."

Will laughed, in turn. "Too many for me — I was there once, you know. All bang! Rattle! Swish! Too much for me — I come home. What's the use of livin' that way? Me for the farm."

Margaret looked at him thoughtfully and suddenly asked strangely, "Have you been happy all your life, Will?"

The man looked at her with utter incomprehension. "Me? Why I guess nobody is all their life! I been all right. What makes you ask?"

She sighed, recognizing that there was no help. "Oh, nothing."

"Funny how thoughtful a marriage'll make you, ain't it? Seems —," then with some constraint, "well, guess I'll be potterin' down to the office, and see how the groom is comin' — I'll be in tomorrow — good-bye!"

She heard the puff and rattle of the car as it rolled away down the hill. A few stitches and she broke her thread and rolled Carl's socks up into a ball. It was done — the last time! Then she lowered her head and the tears fell between her fingers upon the sewing bag. To one passing in the street it might have appeared that she was resting her eyes for a moment in her hands — and she was, her weary, weary eyes, which had held her tears so long!

Even the tears which should have swept the hurts from her soul in passing, as the rain washes the air, were not complete relief. If she could only be satisfied!

She felt an arm about her shoulders and a girl's gentle voice smoothly touched the hum of the late afternoon.

"Margaret — dear mother!"

She did not look up for a moment, but when she



did there was no sign that she had wept, except that her face was a little weary. She smiled into the girl's face.

"Did you see your mother, Helen?"

Helen sat down beside her. "Yes. Carl said when he left me to tell you that he would be up in just a little while."

The caress of the girl's voice over her son's name gave Margaret a moment's jealousy, but in some strange fashion it comforted her, too. She looked at Helen's face as though she had never really seen it before.

Pure! Sweet! Those were the first things that came to one's mind looking at the fine blonde hair, blue eyes not too wide, nose and lips carelessly but delicately cut and the spray of blue that throbbed close to the skin at the temple. Wife — yes, written there in the characters of faith that will not betray faith. Mother — yes, in the eyes that foretold that achievement with writings no less obvious. Margaret searched again and found no more.

"Wife and mother," she said, "will you make him happy? Wife and mother — no more?" Before the moment's pain in the girl's face had faded to understanding, she answered herself, musing, almost content, "No less."

## **The Drowning**

By GRACE HUNTER

Into the lure of a sunset cloud  
That shimmered and hung in the river,  
Startling its mystical, wonderful heart,  
He plunged, the Beautiful Swimmer.  
Straightway the quivering edges of gold  
And of silver curled round him, enfolding them-  
selves,  
And quenching their light in the shadowy marge of  
the river.

All night long men oared their boats  
Up and down the river,  
With ropes and nets and lines they drew  
Among the river ripples.  
Searchlights glared upon the stream,  
Darkly shone the water;  
Pale faces flowered from the gloom,  
They glimmered in the shadows.  
Summer lightning briefly glowed  
On willows wierdly green;  
The sullen thunder faintly rolled  
Over some far off field.

And still at noon the laboring boats  
Plied up and down the stream;  
Against the hot blue of the sky  
The bridge pressed black and strange.  
Then they shattered the depths of the river shadows

With sudden convulsions that boomed  
As the water shot high in the wavering air,  
And in the thick silence that followed,  
Saw only the fish lying stunned on the waves,  
White on the eddying water.

Once again the sunset clouds  
Unfurl their floating colors  
In transparent waters deep.  
They have kept his grace and beauty,  
All his shining loveliness, —  
And his breath's quick, vital pulsing  
Quivers in their waving banners,  
And the gold and silver edges  
Glow anew more softly fair,  
With the tender gleaming  
Of his young dreams.

Up the river comes a row-boat,  
And two weary oarsmen labor  
Solemnly against the current.  
They are climbing the steep pathway,  
Bearing in their arms a burden:  
They have found him — the Good Swimmer.

Softly once again the twilight clouds  
Draw in their radiant edges,  
Pink and tender, gold and silver,  
To the shadow of the bank;  
Over the stream, and over the town  
The darkness flows in a long, lovely ripple.

## Five Poems

By EDWIN FORD PIPER

### PURPLE-DIM

On the sunset shore of the river  
In pageantry of summer  
The prairies lift and roll  
To purple-dim horizons.  
With bee and with bird  
The wilderness is singing,  
And the brooks hum low  
To the sweet wild grasses.

O, the seeker moves  
Over ways untrodden  
Amid roses unfolding  
In the open meadows;  
There is elfin dancing  
Of the dews and shadows  
On the folded poppies  
Where the blackbirds chuckle;  
Spirits are weaving  
In the sunset meadows  
A mystery of beauty  
Purple-dim.

## THE WOLF CUB SHALL SLEEP

And this is the joy of all generations,  
Branches were bare and leaves are singing,  
And the hard fruits are rounding and coloring, —  
Goodly is the bliss when a child is born!  
Lips at the breasts, baby lips at the breast, —  
O Mother Earth!

The wolf cub shall sleep on his dam's shaggy coat,  
And the spotted fawn nuzzle the udder;  
The infant fairy cradled in violets  
Suck with a mouth so dewy delicate;  
And human children shall still their cries, —  
Lips at the breast, baby lips at the breast!  
O Mother Earth!

## TASSELING SMOKE

In the wilderness the rifles bellow  
To scurry and flurry of wing and paw;  
The deer feed far from the native thicket.

\* \* \* \* \*

Axe and hammer echo in rivers;  
Cowbells tinkle, schoolbells clang.  
By bridge and hill the wagons rattle.

\* \* \* \* \*

Tasseling corn waves in the wind;  
Above tall chimneys tasseling smoke, —  
Over trafficking cities a blur of smoke.

## PASSIONATE FINGERS

The brush has borrowed a rainbow  
For painting hopes and dreams;  
The chemistry of spring,  
And the homes of men who toil, —  
The smoke and the sweat of toil,  
And the glory of life outbursting  
From broken and homely humanity, —  
Cello and harp of the spirit  
In the angry fingers, passionate fingers,  
Caressing fingers of life.

## MOONLIT CHANTINGS

Moonlit chantings pass,  
And stiff-toned hymns;  
Fiddle assembles the feet,  
And burly horns are blowing.  
Sounds gather like clouds, —  
Groanings massy, of the frame of the earth;  
Wind in the autumn leaves, and wind in the mountain gorge  
Enfold the fife, the bellow,  
Of insect and bison;  
The growl and the howl  
Of grizzly and coyote.  
  
The sounds are lover and lover  
Enfolded.

## A Man's Enemies

By R. O'GRADY

In the far background lay the green landscape, splashed delicately here and there with white clusters of bloom. But the young man, moodily pulling on his Sunday coat in the kitchen doorway, sensed nothing of the fresh beauty of life. He saw only the dried mud road in front of the house, and the old gray team standing hitched to the light wagon, their knotty joints relaxed and their noses drooping.

Behind him, in the smudgy kitchen, the breakfast of scorched bacon and half-done pancakes had been only partially cleared away. His mother and his sister, Stell, were in the bedroom "getting ready." Stell had been nagging him all morning. She was still nagging.

The young woman came prancing out of the bedroom with her old hat, which had been "fixed over" with new pink ribbons and red and green "artificial," perched jauntily on her mop of curled black hair.

"What's got into you, Glen? A body'd think you was goin' to a fun'ral instead of a weddin', the way you poke!"

Glen had "sassed back" until he was tired of it. He contented himself with making a grimace, which Stell, buttoning her white cotton gloves, did not see.

They went out the door and down the rickety steps, followed by their mother, with her bonnet well over her nose and her tight little knot of grayish-

yellow hair protruding angularly at the back of her head.

"Sakes alive, Glen Hovey!" pursued Stell, "you think ma'n me's goin' to ride on that old dirty ho'ss blanket with our good dresses? Just like you to put the bed-quilt I give you on the front seat, I'll declare —"

Stell was checked by Glen's abrupt stopping in the pathway, and his angry muttering:

"You can set where you please, fer all o' me. *I* ain't goin'."

As he walked away he began to strip off his Sunday coat.

An incoherent plea from his mother, blended with Stell's impatient protest, was of no avail. He was not going to cousin Loretta's wedding — the event for which the family had been preparing for weeks. He strode towards the house.

His mother was saying something, hesitating in the middle of the walk like a battered old weather cock in a changing wind.

"Bad-tempered and stubborn," that was the gist of her reproach. Her boy — so bad-tempered and stubborn — it wouldn't do, it wouldn't do at all for him not to . . . .

Stell pulled her along to the wagon and bundled her in. It was no time for futile coaxing, they were late already. But the girl turned back with a parting shot for Glen, which reached him just before he entered the house and slammed the door.

"I'll stop into Frisby's long enough to let Delia



Ann know what you stayed home for!" she called out as she snatched up the reins and brought them down with a thwack on the near gray's bony haunches.

The light wagon started with a jolt. Stell's made-over hat, heavy with adornment, bounced up and settled over one ear. Her mother clung to the heaving seat.

Glen turned away from the window, where he had been covertly watching. He thrust his hands in his trousers pockets, drew them out again, and breathed a rasping sigh.

He would not have wanted Delia Ann Frisby to know all about what a wretched time they had in their family—he wouldn't have wanted her even to guess. For an instant there came a martyred look into his round blue eyes, and a mistiness, almost of tears. Nothing but a wedding or a funeral would have induced him to try to go any place with Stell. He swore, through clenched teeth, that he would never, never attempt such a thing again.

As he thought about it, he couldn't understand why the horse blanket wasn't just as good as the quilt. It was a softer seat. That was why he had fixed it for the women. Stell just wanted to nag. She wanted to get him angry, so their mother would call him "bad-tempered and stubborn." He was, he knew it, and yet it didn't seem fair. Again the mistiness came into his round blue eyes.

He jerked off the white dotted blue necktie that flowed down the front of his checked gingham shirt, and wrenched off his stiff collar.

He had a drawer in the family bureau where he kept his best things, since the attic room where he slept contained no such receptacle. The top of the bureau was littered with Stell's broken hairpins and a curling iron. The odor of scorched hair lingered. Flung over a chair was her soiled work apron, and the breakfast dishes were piled, unwashed, in the sink.

Glen folded the blue-dotted tie and put it away, and the yellowed collar, which had grown dingy from constant lying by, rather than from frequent wear.

He banged the drawer shut, looked in the scarred mirror and turned his shirtband in at the throat, exposing the soft, white flesh beneath the ring of sunburn on his neck. Then he rumbled his reddish curls, which he had tried to make smooth for the wedding.

There was no self-approval in the face that looked back at him. In fact, there was scarcely recognition. The blue eyes were staring vacantly.

The last time he had donned the collar and tie, he was getting ready to take Delia Ann Frisby to the picture show at Lakeville. His expression had been glad then. Now, probably he would never put on again those carefully hoarded articles of dress-up attire.

But he must go somewhere — do something. The place made him desperate, with flies buzzing over the unwashed dishes, and the women's hastily cast-off garments scattered about.

He would go fishing — that's what he would do — take his dog for company and go fishing. It was a bright May day.

Flinging open the door he whistled and called: "Tige! here Tige!"

No response, no glad scamper of canine feet.

If it hadn't been for the fuss with Stell, he would have noticed sooner. When the women started away Tige was nowhere to be seen. The pup had hidden in the hazel brush across the road, and then followed the team away. It was a trick of Tige's. Of course Stell would let him go, just out of spite.

In the garden a big red rooster, having found a way through a bad place in the fence, was making havoc of the lettuce bed. Glen did not care, though he had worked so hard to powder the soil, level it off, and mark his drills all straight.

Stell had laughed at him, and said that more "garden sass" would grow in crooked rows than in straight. There was no use in being so particular about a garden.

Of course he became angry and refused to help them any more.

"Bad-tempered and stubborn," his mother had called him. And he was — yes, so bad-tempered and stubborn that he would stand there and let the old rooster tear the whole garden up by the roots.

No dog, no friend!

Glen dropped down on the rickety step — he would have fixed that step long ago if Stell had not nagged him so much about it — and put his head in his hands.

A soft breeze fanned his reddish curls and his cheek, bringing to his nostrils the perfume of wild plum blossoms. It would be nice up the river, but he didn't want to go fishing without his dog.

Suddenly it popped into his mind what he would do. He would go to Lakeville and get drunk. Just one other time in his life he had been drunk. That was long before he had taken Delia Ann Frisby to the picture show in town. Well, he would not think about Delia Ann. By this time Stell must have told her about him. Delia Ann was the kind of girl who would have a fine contempt for such behavior.

He felt in his pocket, took out a small, greasy money pouch and jingled its contents. Then he got his oldest hat and started off.

The red rooster in the garden plied his destructive work with relentless claws. There was a break in the wire netting, where he had got through. As Glen passed stubbornly by the garden, he thought of the time he had gone without his dinner to fix old Mrs. Hines's hog-fence. He had no trouble working for Mrs. Hines. She wasn't always nagging. She used to praise the gardens he made for her, and — such nice things she used to fix for him to eat!

But old Mrs. Hines was gone, and her little place deserted.

Glen rattled his money pouch disconsolately in his pocket as he walked along the beaten path that led past the barnlot. He would like to make more money; it would have been nice, sometime in the faraway future, to have had a home of his own, and

some one to keep it tidy and fix nice things to eat — some one like Delia Ann. . . .

But he would never have anything. There was no chance for him. This year his mother had let all her tillable land to Orion Crabtree, on the shares. It was Stell's doing. Stell and Orion were going together, and just because Stell was older than Glen, she had her way. Of course, he worked for Orion, but part of his wages were held back until the harvest. In the meantime he made barely enough for the family to live upon.

Behind the low, unpainted barn, a calf kept bawling — an insistent, hungry bawl. Glen disliked to have "critters" hungry. It made him feel desperately hard-hearted as he passed. But the little scamp had knocked over its pail of warm milk that morning at feeding time, and Stell was too busy curling her hair to skim up any more. Let the little beggar starve. What did anything matter any more?

The road to Lakeville led past the Frisby house. He would not go by the road. There was a short-cut across the creek which divided the two farms, and through the Frisby pasture. Formerly Glen had liked to go by the house and see Delia Ann's geranium plants all in bloom between the white parted curtains at the window. Everything looked so neat, and it gave him such a homelike feeling. That was before he had thought about keeping company with Delia Ann. But since the day he had taken her to the picture show, he had always come through the

pasture, and had made his trips so that he might return about feeding time. When the Frisby men were in the field, Delia Ann took charge of the feeding. He liked to happen by in time to help her throw fodder to the cattle.

Frisby had stopped feeding since the pasture had come on so rapidly. Besides, this early in the day the men would be in the fields and Delia Ann and her mother busy with the housework. He would meet no one.

If he went by the house, Delia Ann would see him and say to herself: "There he is. Going off by himself to town. Too bad-tempered and stubborn to go with his mother and sister to his cousin's wedding."

And that would be the truth about him. He could never be what he ought to be. Delia Ann knew it now, and so he might as well go with the tough gang at Lakeville.

Down the path a little way, Glen leaped a barbed wire fence and struck through the woods. A snowy branch of wild plum blossoms nodded right across his path. He reached up and broke off a spray, feeling as though he ought not to touch it. Diffidently he put it to his nose. Then, just as diffidently, stuck it in the buckle of his suspender. For a moment he felt as he had when Delia Ann put a sprig of geranium in his buttonhole one Sunday last March. He had always wanted to give Delia Ann flowers, but had none to give.

He pulled the sprig of feathery bloom from his suspender buckle and gazed at it, contemplatively.

Then he tossed it away. Since Delia Ann had found out how bad-tempered and stubborn he was, he did not want to think of her. He wanted to get drunk.

Then no one would speak to him. Stell would not even pick a quarrel with him. He would be beneath her notice. Every one had looked askance at him after he got drunk the other time. Finally, when he did not do it again, they seemed to forget and treated him as usual. But just wait until the second offence. They would say he was wild and bad, and have nothing to do with him.

But what did he care? Things could not be any worse than they were.

Through the brush that lined his path he could see the stile that led over the fence into the Frisby pasture. He heard a rustling movement in the poplar thicket. Some one came out a few yards ahead of him, from the path that branched off towards the Frisby house. It was Delia Ann Frisby, carrying a large basket of turnips toward the stile. She did not look around.

Glen Hovey stood still, while the blood bounded faster in his veins. He held his breath. He did not want to meet Delia Ann. She would not want to meet him. He would slip back into concealment behind the bushes.

Slowly and cautiously he began his retreat.

Delia Ann's feet lagged. She stopped. She set down the basket as though it were pulling heavily on her arms, and stood in a listening attitude, but she did not look around.

With stealthy steps Glen edged his way backward in the path. He could see the red burning up into Delia Ann's white neck under her smooth brown braids. She must have overheated herself. She seemed to be panting. But she did not move her head.

Presently she stopped, tried to pick up the basket, and dropped it with a thud. Her arms went limp at her sides.

Glen Hovey leaped forward.

"Le' me lift it, Deelia," he mumbled, as he agilely shouldered her burden.

"W'y, Glen!" she welcomed, with a great show of surprise, "where'd you come — ?" But she did not finish the question. She laughed and reddened.

He carried the basket to the stile and emptied it over the fence.

Some of the young stock ambled up and ate desultorily of the turnips, while all the veterans kept nibbling greedily at the lush young grass.

Glen looked questioningly at Delia Ann, then glanced away at the sun. Squinting from the sharp glare, he rested his eyes on the soft young green of the landscape.

Delia Ann was leaning against the fence, close to his elbow. She would not want to be so near him. He drew away, before he looked at her. She might think he had come through the pasture expecting to meet her, as usual. He did not want her to think that. He could not figure out how she happened to be here at such an early hour.



"I s'posed you'd quit feedin' by now," he said bluntly, meeting her glance.

"I — I was just cleanin' out the root cave," she stammered, "and I had to get shut of them turnips."

What had got into Delia Ann? She had never before seemed shy, this way. Neither had she been so weak in the arms that she couldn't have carried a basket of turnips twice that far.

Emboldened by her diffidence, he kept looking at her downcast face.

Glen had heard the fellows at Lakeville say Delia Ann was not pretty. Those same fellows thought his sister Stell was pretty, with her bushed and frizzy hair almost hiding her little face. But he fancied smooth thick braids like Delia Ann's, and a few freckles across the cheekbones were of no moment to him. Delia Ann's neck was always clean and white where it met the plain stitched band of her calico dress, while Stell's often looked as if it needed washing.

If she held her eyelids down that way he could look at her all day. He felt involuntarily in the buckle of his suspenders. If he had kept that spray of plum blossoms he could give it to her now — thrust it into her hand and run — run away never to see her again.

Suddenly she looked at him. Her eyes had grown steady and bright. They always seemed to see more than other people's eyes.

From sheer embarrassment he spoke:

"You — you must have worked awful hard, clearing out the root cave."

She laughed. Was she laughing at him? She seemed slyly amused at something.

"Well, this is the first basketful I've taken out yet," she confessed, still laughing.

Yesterday he would have offered to help her finish, but today it wouldn't do. She wouldn't want him, that was why she acted so queer. She knew what he was and she didn't want him about.

"I must be goin'," he mumbled, edging further away.

Delia Ann started, almost imperceptibly.

"I had some new variegated tulips come out to-day. You just ought to see 'em," she announced, alluringly.

"That so?" he commented without interest. "Well, I got to be goin'."

Again Delia Ann made a quick movement. He thought she was going to pick up her basket, but she did not. She straightened, and looked right at him.

"What's your big hurry, Glen?" she asked, with such a kind, frank challenge in her tone that he was on the point of blurting out:

"Because you don't want me here — I'm bad-tempered and stubborn, that's why, and I'm goin' — I'm goin' to Lakeville to . . . ."

But he kept the confession in his swelling throat. Such things could not be spoken outright to any one, no matter how kind a friend.

What if he should make mention of Cousin Loretta's wedding, and, in an indirect way, try to find out how much Stell had said about the fuss when she stopped in at Delia Ann's?

While his brain was swimming with this idea, Delia Ann answered it as though she might have heard.

"Your folks went by about an hour ago," she remarked quietly. "I 'lowed to send some flowers for the weddin' if they'd stopped."

"They didn't stop!" breathed Glen.

Then it was the same between him and Delia Ann as it had been yesterday and the day before, and all the days that they had been meeting as friends!

But she was going to ask him why he had not gone to the wedding with his mother and sister. She was on the point of asking him, looking at him in that deeply searching way.

Should he make up some lie about it? or confess to her the miserable truth — even that he had started to Lakeville to get drunk? In either case, he could never look her in the face again. But, no matter, she wouldn't care to see him any more.

She pushed the basket out of her way and moved toward him.

"Glen," she rested her brown hand lightly on his checked gingham sleeve, "I want you to come up to the house with me. We churned; there's fresh buttermilk in the spring-house. Come on up!" she urged, as he held back. "I want you to."

Glen stooped and picked up her basket. She was still his friend. All at once he felt like a new person.

They walked abreast along the path, brushing up sweet odors of dainty flowering things as they passed.

A little plum tree at their right waved its plumage suggestively. Glen paused, broke off a spray and gave it to Delia Ann, dropping it over her shoulder as she walked.

She took it caressingly in her hands, but did not look up. They stopped at the spring house for a pitcher of buttermilk, and carried it into the white scrubbed kitchen.

Delia Ann, moving about with his spray of plum blossoms at her bosom, took some glittering glasses from the cupboard. There were shining dishes ranged along the shelves, and polished tins above the stove. White muslin curtains fluttered at the windows.

Glen looked about him. He felt more and more like a new person in a new world. They drank their fill of cold buttermilk, and at once Delia Ann took the glasses to rinse them at the sink. She had been silent, but Glen felt there was something she wanted to say.

Perhaps, at last, she was going to ask him the expected question. Well, he wouldn't pretend; he would tell the truth and let that end it.

She hated to ask him. A shyness was coming over her again.

"Say, Glen," she began, rubbing intently at one of the glasses, "you — you ain't farmin' the place this year, are you?"

Glen took his old felt hat from his knee and looked hard at it.

"Only workin' for Orion," he admitted shame-

facedly, "and there ain't scarce work 'nough for two."

Delia Ann reached up suddenly to put a glass on the cupboard shelf.

"I hear Tom Taylor's wantin' a hand real bad," she announced in a breathless voice. "His big Swede's quit and left him in the lurch — went to Dakota to take a claim."

Glen started erect in his chair, then settled back, crushing the old felt hat in his palms.

"But he wouldn't want me," he objected huskily.

"He wouldn't? I heard him askin' pa about you only this morning."

Delia Ann took up the other glass, while Glen shifted undecidedly and fitted the hat over his knee.

"P'r'aps," she faltered, in a voice that had grown all at once dry and small, "p'r'aps there's others think more of you than you do yourself, Glen."

Glen looked up quickly, incredulously, into her crimsoning face bowed over the throbbing white plum spray at her bosom.

"You — Delia Ann —" he wondered huskily, "you mean that you — think —?"

"That — that depends on what you think of yourself, Glen Hovey," murmured Delia Ann.

Scarcely conscious of what he did, Glen had risen from his chair and stood hesitating. The white-scrubbed floor swam around him and the muslin curtains at the window seemed to flutter to the beat of his throbbing veins. But Delia Ann did not look up. She was searching engrossedly for a speck on the shining glass.

In the presence of her embarrassment a reckless boldness seized him. He took one step that brought him so close to her side he could feel the beating of her heart. He looked down at her cheek, where the elusive color came and went. Then, while his big brown hand rested daringly upon her shoulder, he bent to her ear, repeating huskily:

"You — Delia Ann — you mean it?"

Suddenly, Delia Ann darted across the room. But her warm, satiny cheek had brushed his lips as she ducked her head to escape him. Glen was sure of what had happened. It was a new sensation — something like holding a garden rose to his face, but not even that. . . .

And there she stood by the window, rubbing hard at that glass, trying to pretend that nothing unusual had taken place. Girls must be that way.

"Well, I guess I'd better be goin'." Glen managed to articulate the words, though the naturalness he tried to put into his voice would not come out. "There's a few jobs at home to 'tend to before I leave — if I get that place at Tom Taylor's — the garden fence —" A hotter red went burning into his face, for the memory of that garden made him feel contemptible — "and I been goin' to make some stanchions for Stell to feed the calves in."

With a quick little gasp of approval, as if not trusting herself to speak, Delia Ann followed him to the door. She stood and watched him go striding along the path through the budding currant bushes.

"I'll go see Taylor this evening," he called back

as he turned to wave good-by, from an emboldening distance, with the old felt hat.

Delia Ann, in the doorway, was smiling, the tremulous smile of a woman who is glad.

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### Three Poems

By JEWELL BOTHWELL TULL

#### OCTOBER

I thought your heart a thing of dancing gold and  
crimson —

To-day I see only dull-brown leaves dead at my feet.

I thought your soul was flaming sumac —

I hear only a gray wind sobbing by a gray river.

#### CANNING

In September and October

Grapes ripen

And corn and tomatoes

And maple leaves.

Good house-wives, over hot stoves,

Canning corn and tomatoes —

I, lolling on river bank

Lolling in sunshine

Canning October, —

Next winter when you're eating grape-jam

Will you ask me to supper?

## SUMAC IN NOVEMBER

It took all Summer plus Spring  
To burn you into forty flaming Souls,

And now you are forty handful of black ashes,  
Forty black crows, waiting, silent.

After December you will be forty white wishes,  
Forty white angels.

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## Contributors to This Issue

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EDWIN FORD PIPER, one of the founders of THE MIDLAND and an associate editor, has contributed to other numbers of the present volume of THE MIDLAND.

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JEWELL BOTHWELL TULL is the wife of Professor Clyde Tull of the English Department of Cornell College, Mount Vernon, Iowa.



